

REMARKS

In response to the Amendment filed October 20, 2003, the Examiner repeated the previous claim rejections. Thus, the status of the claims is the following.

Claims 60, 66, 126, and 132-160 are pending in the application.

Claims 60, 66, 157, and 158 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over previously-cited Ohyama et al. (US 4,767,927) in view of previously-cited Struye et al. (US 6,392,249).

Claims 133-138 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. in view of previously-cited Fukai et al. (US 4,914,294) and previously-cited Watanabe et al. (US 4,831,626).

Claims 149 and 150 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. in view of previously-cited Yasuda (US 5,602,402).

Claims 126, 132, 159, and 160 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohyama et al. in view of Struye et al.

Claims 139-144 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. in view of Fukai et al. and Watanabe et al.

Claims 151 and 152 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. in view of Yasuda.

Claims 145-148 and 153-156 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim.

In the October 20 Amendment, Applicant argued that there is no suggestion or motivation to combine Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. The Examiner's alleged motivation to combine the

teachings of Ohyama et al. and Struye et al. to replace the halogen lamp and its optics with an organic EL device, is to make an image read-out apparatus more compact by eliminating complex optics. See Detailed Action at p. 3, second full paragraph. Applicant argued that although making an image read-out apparatus more compact might be desirable, neither of the cited references suggest replacing the halogen lamp and its optics of Ohyama et al. with the organic EL device of Struye et al.

The Examiner appears to now contend that the optics should be retained for purposes of maintaining a high SNR. However, if the bulk of the optical elements is retained, the Examiner's proffered motivation to combine the references for compactness would be undermined. Similarly, the Examiner notes the close proximity of light placement as a benefit of replacing the halogen element of Ohyama et al. with the organic EL element of Struye et al. However, as previously argued, the close proximity as discussed in Struye would require read out from an opposite side of the sheet relative to the light source. Reading out the light emitted from the stimuable phosphor sheet from an opposite side of the sheet relative to the light source would lead to excess scatter in the sheet, thereby reducing SNR. This undermines the Examiner's second rationale for combining Ohyama et al. and Struye et al.

In summary, Applicant submits that the Examiner has not offered a consistent or supportable rationale for combining Ohyama and Struye.

Furthermore, the Examiner's proposed modification of Ohyama et al. by Struye et al. would not meet the requirements of the claims of the present invention. The Examiner asserts that the focusing optics of Ohyama et al. would be eliminated in the suggested modification, since the EL device could be positioned at close proximity to the stimuable phosphor sheet. When the emitted light is received from the same side of the stimuable phosphor sheet as the

light source in order to improve the quality of image, the light source is required to be spaced away from the stimuable phosphor sheet, as in Ohyama. By contrast, since the EL light source in Struye is in close contact with the stimuable phosphor sheet, the emitted light must be received from the side opposite from the EL light source of the stimuable phosphor sheet. As noted in col. 3, lines 59-62 of Struye, "stimulated light leaves the storage panel at the side opposite to the EL-element and is captured by capturing means arranged for capturing the light pixel-wise." Thus, in the modified Ohyama/Struye system suggested by the Examiner, the light emitted from the stimuable phosphor sheet would be emitted from the back surface thereof. However, claims 60 and 66 of the present invention recite receiving light, which is emitted from the linear area of the front surface of the stimuable phosphor sheet exposed to the linear stimulating rays. Therefore, claims 60, 66, 157, and 158 are allowable over the prior art.

Applicant points out that arguments related to the foregoing were presented in the Amendment filed October 20, but the Examiner did not respond to them. In particular, the organic EL placement relative to the sheet creates diffusion, thereby reducing image quality. Thus, Applicant submits that the claims are allowable for the reasons presented in the October 20 Amendment also.

With further regard to the organic EL device, Applicant has the following comments. An organic EL light source can be formed not as a line light source in which a plurality of point-like light sources are arranged in a line, but as a line light source in which emitting parts themselves of light sources are arranged in line. Even if a line light source is formed by arranging a plurality of organic EL light sources, which are point-like light sources in the shape, in a line, the organic EL light sources are arranged to be close to one another, since a circuit for the organic EL device is small. For the reasons above, a line light source constituted of an organic EL device allows

the light intensity distribution to be uniform in the line direction compared with a line light source constituted of LEDs or LDs which are arranged in a line. Therefore, when an organic line light source is employed, an optical system for uniformizing the light intensity distribution is not required, whereby the apparatus can be made thin.

Claims 126, 132, 159 and 160 are allowable over the prior art, for reasons analogous to those presented above in relation to claims 60, 66, 157, and 158.

Claims 133-144 and 149-152 are allowable over the prior art, at least because of their dependence from claims 60, 66, 126, and 132, respectively. The secondary references do not make up for the combination deficiencies of Ohyama and Struye.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby solicited. If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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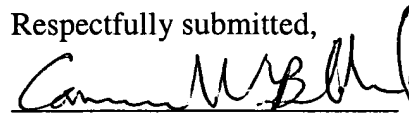
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